

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**

**OCTOBER 18, 2016**

**Increasing Federal Rental Assistance Resources for Homeless Veterans**

Since 2010, thanks to concerted action at the federal level, homelessness among veterans nationwide has been reduced by an estimated 47% and unsheltered homelessness has fallen by 56%. These national figures reflect the unprecedented collaboration within local jurisdictions. Los Angeles County and Los Angeles City have collaborated with multiple partners in the corresponding Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC) to ensure that homeless veterans are prioritized for housing and services.

Federal resources allocated through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program have been a tremendous tool in the LA CoC's pursuit of ending veteran homelessness. The HUD-VASH program combines rental assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's (LAHSA) most recent Point-in-Time Count demonstrated the effectiveness of the local

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approach, as the total number of homeless veterans in the Los Angeles CoC decreased from 4,016 in 2015 to 2,728 in 2016, a 32% reduction in the span of a year.

In spite of this progress, more work remains to be done. LAHSA's 2016 Point-in-Time Count also found that, within the boundaries of the LA CoC, 1,485 homeless veterans remain unsheltered, living outdoors and exposed to the elements. This equates to 11.4% of the nation's unsheltered homeless veteran population.

Every year since 2008, HUD and VA have awarded HUD-VASH vouchers based on geographic need and public housing agency (PHA) administrative performance. The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA) in particular has demonstrated outstanding success, streamlining administrative requirements, incentivizing landlords and partnering with experienced nonprofits to utilize 100% of its HUD-VASH voucher allocation. However, in spite of HACoLA's stellar performance, and although the Los Angeles CoC is home to 11.4% of the nation's unsheltered homeless veteran population, the PHAs of Los Angeles County and Los Angeles City received merely 715 HUD-VASH vouchers or 7.5% of the national allocation in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. To date, the County's and City's housing authorities have received a combined total of 436 HUD-VASH vouchers in FY 2016. However, HUD has not yet allocated \$15 million of the \$60 million appropriated for HUD-VASH vouchers in FY 2016. Under the leadership of Senator Dianne Feinstein, the discrepancy between the share of homeless veterans in Los Angeles and the share of HUD-VASH vouchers has been highlighted as an issue requiring immediate resolution.

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HUD's nationwide Point-in-Time Count showed that homelessness among veterans is down by nearly 50 percent since 2010. If HUD and VA are to continue that progress and achieve the goal of ending veteran homelessness, it is imperative that the County and City of Los Angeles receive a fair share of HUD-VASH vouchers. An additional 154 HUD-VASH vouchers in FY 2016 should be allocated to Los Angeles County to ensure that the work to rapidly house unsheltered homeless veterans will continue apace.

It also is important that Congress appropriate \$75 million for HUD-VASH vouchers in FY 2017, the same funding level as in FYs 2010 through 2015. Funding for HUD-VASH vouchers was cut to \$60 million in FY 2016, and would be further reduced to \$50 million in the Senate FY 2017 Transportation-HUD appropriations bill and eliminated entirely in the House version. More HUD-VASH funding should be provided until homelessness among veterans is ended throughout the nation, including in Los Angeles County.

**I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS** direct the Chief Executive Officer to:

- 1) Prepare and send a five-signature letter from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to the Honorable Julian Castro, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to respectfully request that Los Angeles County is allocated a fair share of annual federal resources dedicated to homeless veterans, including an additional allocation of 154 vouchers in Fiscal Year 2016 through the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program;

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- 2) Prepare and send a five-signature letter to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation asking them to support an appropriation of \$75 million for HUD-VASH vouchers in FY 2017, and Los Angeles County's request of a fair share of annual federal resources dedicated to homeless veterans, including an additional allocation of 154 HUD-VASH vouchers in Fiscal Year 2016; and
- 3) Continue to monitor and include this issue in her legislative update reports to the Board of Supervisors.

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(DW/YV)